

Friday, July 27, 2018

Nevertheless

1 Kings 10-11

They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, "You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods."

Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love.

1 Kings 11:2

1 Kings 2-10 give us a glimpse into the glory of Solomon's reign. It is amazing to try to consider that splendor and majesty. It is in many ways surreal. While he was given a blessing, a throne, and wisdom by God, Solomon's lifestyle held great potential for overindulgence in the things of this world. It caused him to specifically disobey God. His heart was divided. While Solomon loved God (3:3), nevertheless he held fast in love to that which God prohibited. It would be his downfall and the downfall of a nation. He led the people of Israel to worship and adore detestable gods. He built places of sacrifice to false gods. Based on his propensity for overindulgence, I am sure that these were ornate, attractive, and served to draw people away from worshiping God in His temple. His choices and his lifestyle were in direct opposition to the prayer that he prayed when the temple was dedicated (chapter 8). The actions caused the division of the nation. The wisest king lived out his life in foolish self-indulgence. In what ways do I stand opposed to God? What are the things of this world that I choose to hold fast to in love? Reading about Solomon causes me to search my heart in new ways.

Dear God, forgive me for the things that I hold fast to in love other than You. I know they are there and many times I am blind to them. Reveal them to me please. Amen.

Saturday, July 28, 2018

Downfall

1 Kings 12-13

This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.

1 Kings 13:34

Jeroboam was faced with a choice. God had come to him and made him an amazing offer. God told him that if he served God, God would establish a dynasty for him that would be as enduring as the one God had built for David (11:34-39). Apparently, Jeroboam did not see this as a good option. Instead, he chose to rely on himself (12:26) to establish the kingdom. It turned out that this was not the best choice. It caused him to establish a new place for the Israelites to worship, and then he made two calves and told the people these were the gods that led them out of Egypt. This is all wrong on multiple levels. What is amazing is that the people believed it. They had not remembered the one true God who had rescued them so that they could worship Him. They had turned their heart from God, embracing false gods instead. We will never know the potential kingdom Jeroboam turned his back on. Sin led to the downfall and destruction of what might have been great. One man made the decision to trust himself instead of God. I have the same tendency in my life and in my heart. All too often I find myself trusting in my thoughts as opposed to God's promises. I can learn from Jeroboam not to place trust in anything other than God.

Dear God, you know my heart and you know all the potential that I have to accomplish great things for You as I align my will and my heart with Yours. Please give me an undivided heart of worship for You. Help me trust in You alone. Amen.

July 23 - 28, 2018



by Senior Pastor Chuck Cervenka
a daily devotional of Calvary Community Church

Monday, July 23, 2018

Except

1 Kings 2-3

Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the statutes of his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.
1 Kings 3:3

The books of the kings open with the throne being passed, at God's command, from David to Solomon. David charges Solomon to hold tightly to God and to obey and love the LORD and to walk faithfully with Him. David dies and God establishes Solomon's throne. But sadly, Solomon quickly shows that he is not David, nor does he have the heart for God that David did. Solomon loves the LORD. No other king in the books of the kings will be said to love the LORD. But then comes the word *except*. This is an enormous word that will give us an insight into what will be the downfall of a king. He walked like David, *except*... This is the problem. The promise of God was not that he would bless the kings who walked in the way of the LORD, *except*. There was no exception clause offered. Solomon took a foreign wife and kept her in Jerusalem as he built a palace for her and a temple for the LORD. He offered sacrifices and incense on the high places. These two things would be the undoing of Solomon and his potential and would eventually lead to the division of the nation. How does this happen in my life? I love the Lord—truly, I do. Do I have an exception clause? How do I fall short of complete and total devotion to God? It is there that repentance is needed.

Dear God, search me and know me—know my heart. Show me quickly where I allow other things to distract me from total devotion to You. Let my love for You be without exception. Amen.

Tuesday, July 24, 2018

Wisdom

1 Kings 4-5

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than any other man...
1 Kings 4:29-31a

Solomon was a man who had been blessed by God. He was wiser than any other man. 1 Kings 4 describes a man who lacks for nothing. He has all he needs and wants. He is a king who is over a nation that is at great peace. There is prosperity. The people he is ruling are happy (4:20). Men from all over are coming to hear the wisdom of Solomon. He writes proverbs, many of which are preserved in the book of Proverbs. He wrote songs and psalms. He learned and grew in his wisdom. He used his wisdom to accumulate things, some of which were not to be accumulated (Deut. 17:16). Solomon's name has come to be synonymous with wisdom and wealth. I try to imagine the scene in ancient Israel as peace reigns and people from all over the known world are coming in and out of Jerusalem to listen to Solomon speak. They bring riches and treasures from other lands. Surely, this was a wonderful time to be an Israelite. By all appearances, God is highly exalted, and it is in this setting that the temple can now be built. I am told that if I lack wisdom, I may ask and it will be given to me. Am I asking God for His wisdom so that I may best have an impact for Him in this world?

Dear God, thank You for the wisdom that You have given to me. I am blessed to know You and Your goodness and greatness. Help me use my wisdom for You. Amen.

Wednesday, July 25, 2018

If

1 Kings 6-7

The word of the LORD came to Solomon: "As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, carry out my regulations and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfill through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel."
1 Kings 6:11-13

1 Kings 6 and 7 give the description of the marvelous temple and palace that Solomon built. The temple was a breathtaking structure. I close my eyes as I try to imagine this temple. There is gold everywhere, with ornate carvings and a wash basin that is said to have held 11,500 gallons of water! It was built in such a way that all those who came to hear the wisdom of Solomon would see the temple where Israel and its king worshiped the one true God, who gave Solomon that wisdom they were seeking. Solomon followed the design left for him by his father and then moved the items that David has dedicated to the LORD into the temple. I imagine living in the city, watching the construction, and being awestruck. The LORD was ready to make His dwelling among the Israelites. He reminds Solomon that while the temple is built by human hands, the Occupant stays based upon the response of human hearts—especially the heart of their king. It was up to Solomon to live in such a way that God would remain living among the Israelites. God will remain visible in my life as I walk closely with Him, careful to do all that He has decreed for me, rejoicing in the peace that comes from obedience.

Dear Lord, please remain visible in my life as I give my heart to You. You take the deed to my heart and make it Your home. Decorate it with Your love and goodness. Amen.

Thursday, July 26, 2018

Never

1 Kings 8-9

May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our fathers; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep the commands, decrees and regulations he gave our fathers.
1 Kings 8:57-58

The prayer and blessing of Solomon, as recorded in Kings is a special prayer indeed. The temple is not a magic building. It is the presence of the LORD that is the power. It is the LORD choosing to live in the midst of His people that will remind them to continue to live their lives for Him. As they are tempted to wander, they will remember that He is there. When they sin against Him, they will remember to repent. When the temple is seen by foreigners, they will turn to the God of Israel. On this day, amidst great celebration and sacrifice, there can be no doubt, as the dark cloud of God's presence falls on the temple, that God is with them—in their very midst. Solomon prays that God may never leave them. He prays that God will turn their hearts toward Him and keep their hearts toward God and God alone. He prays that God will cause them to walk in the truth and in obedience. This is my prayer as well. May God never leave His people. May God cause us to turn our hearts fully toward Him. May we not be distracted by other gods and the desires of this world. May we walk with Him.

Lord, turn our hearts to You. May all of us who have called on Your name and received Your salvation walk in Your ways and keep Your commands. We are Yours. Amen.